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ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
For the Year 1925.



To the Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Aylsham Rural District Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1925 arranged in accordance with instructions received from the Ministry of Health.

I have the honour to remain,

Your obedient Servant,

H. H. BACK,

Medical Officer of Health.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Area | 69,341 acres |
| Population (census 1921) | 16,280 |
| " (estimated 1925) | 16,730 |

This estimated population for 1925, which shows an increase of 450 since the census of 1921, is furnished from the office of the Registrar-General, and the figure is arrived at after allowance for the rate of natural increase as evidenced by the births and deaths in the District and of migration as indicated from other sources of information, such as the changes in the numbers on the Electoral Register and emigration returns obtained by the Board of Trade. Successive Census returns have shown a tendency for the population of the district to decline. In 1881 it was 18,057, and by the Census, 1921, it had fallen to 16,280, and it is now pleasing to be assured that we are again becoming numerically greater at the rate of fifty persons per annum. At the same time it is difficult to conceive how this additional population will find house accommodation in a district at the present time inadequately supplied with cottages.

PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE AREA, with its Social Conditions, including the Chief Occupations of the Inhabitants.

The District covers an area of 69,341 acres, its greatest length from east to west is nearly twenty miles, and the widest part from north to south is nine miles. It is a well-wooded district, and for the most part consists of good agricultural land. Passing through it are the upper reaches and small tributaries of the river Bure. The occupation of the inhabitants is agriculture and its allied industries, malting, milling, and works connected with agricultural machinery. There are no factories or industries likely to affect the health of the workers. Aylsham, with an area of 4,305 acres and a population (Census 1921) of 2,466 has urban characteristics, as have also Reepham and the parishes of Foulsham, Cawston, and Coltishall. In the remainder of the District the cottages are arranged in small groups or are scattered and generally have good gardens attached to them.

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Number of inhabited houses (1921) | 4,100 |
| Number of families or separate occupiers (1921) | 4,118 |
| Rateable Value of the District | £91,447 |
| Sum represented by 1d. rate | £250 5s. 7d. |

VITAL STATISTICS.

| BIRTHS. | Total. | Male. | Female. |
|---------------------|--------|-------|---------|
| Legitimate | 252 | 139 | 113 |
| Illegitimate | 19 | 10 | 9 |
| Total | 271 | 149 | 122 |

Birth-rate, 16'2. (England and Wales, 18'3.) This is a remarkably low rate compared with twenty-five years ago, when the average annual number of births was 483 and the birth-rate stood at 25 per 1000 population.

| DEATHS. | Males | Females |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Total | 101 | 121 |
| Death-rate, 13'2. (England and Wales, 12'2.) | | |
| The chief causes of death were :—Heart Disease, 25 ; Cancer, 18 ; Influenza, 12 ; Tuberculosis, 9. | | |
| Number of women dying in, or in consequence of, child-birth — | | |
| <i>a.</i> From Sepsis | 0 | |
| <i>b.</i> " other causes | 0 | |
| Deaths of infants under one year of age per 1000 births :— | | |
| Legitimate | 47 | 48 |
| Illegitimate | 52 | |
| Total | | |

The total number of illegitimate births was 19 as against 23 the previous year.

There were no deaths from Whooping-Cough ; one death from Measles ; and one death from Diarrhœa (under two years of age).

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

No hospitals beyond the Workhouse Infirmary are provided by the Local Authority for (1) Tuberculosis, (2) Maternity, (3) Children, (4) Fever, (5) Other Diseases.

A corrugated iron building with accommodation for three patients is held in readiness for the reception of small-pox cases.

No Institutional provision is made in the District for unmarried mothers, illegitimate infants, and homeless children.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES.—*a.* For infectious cases—none.

b. For non-infectious and accident cases, an ambulance under the control of the Red Cross Society can be obtained from Norwich.

CLINICS AND TREATMENT CENTRES.—None are in operation in the District.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS.

Medical Officer of Health (part time) ... H. H. BACK, M.B.(Lond).

Sanitary Inspector (whole time) ... H. W. T. TROTTER, C.R.S.I.

Professional Nursing in the Home.—Most of the parishes have the services of a District Nurse, who also acts as Health Visitor. In special cases of infectious disease, such as enteric fever in a crowded locality, a professional nurse is provided in necessitous cases and paid for by the District Council.

Ten midwives practise in the District. They are not subsidised by the District Council.

Chemical and other Laboratory work is provided for by the County Laboratory. During the year 130 swabs were sent for examination. In 18 instances the *Diphtheria bacillus* was discovered.

LEGISLATION IN FORCE.—No adoptive Acts are in force in the District.

Regulations with respect to Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops have been in force since 1907.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

WATER.—There is no public supply to any of the villages in the District. Private wells of varying depth supply the needs of the people. The shallow surface-water wells are in constant danger of pollution from sunk privy bins, slop holes, and refuse heaps, and the maintenance of a pure water supply depends more on the removal of these sources of contamination than on the cleaning out and repair of the wells themselves.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.—The sources of pollution of the river Bure in its course through the District are insignificant. There are no factories on its banks to discharge deleterious effluents into its stream, and the very small proportion of drainage which has the river as its ultimate destination has to a large extent been purified by the vegetation in the ditches through which it has passed on its way.

DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.—None of the small towns or villages of the District are provided with systems of drainage and sewage disposal. In the case of the larger houses, where water closets are in use, the sewage is usually collected in a cesspool, which in some instances is so placed that soakage can take place without danger; but in other cases, where the grounds are more circumscribed, the contents of the cesspool have to be pumped out and used for the irrigation of the garden. Where smaller houses are concerned, only sink and slop water have to be dealt with, and, provided the garden is of sufficient size, no difficulty is experienced in its disposal. In the small towns and larger villages, where urban conditions prevail, and there are no gardens, the problem of getting rid of slop water has been very generally solved by throwing it either directly into the road surface water gully or into a drain connected with the road surface water system. A number of small drainage systems have thus been evolved by which the sewage of the more closely built parts of the villages is dealt with more or less successfully.

These small drainage systems have received the attention of the Sanitary Committee, and during the last five years many of them have been adapted more thoroughly to the purpose they are intended to serve. During the past year the two open sewers at Coltishall have been cleaned out, as also the settlement tank connected with one of them. At Foulsham a portion of the main sewer blew up during a storm, when it was found that the pipes were of local make and unglazed. They have been replaced by modern 12 in. glazed pipes. Repairs have also been necessary to the brick arch sewer at Hackford, and it has been found necessary to re-lay a portion of the Burgh Road sewer at Aylsham owing to damage caused by road traffic.

CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.—Every year there has been a steady increase in the number of closets on the pail system, which has now almost entirely superseded the old bin. The introduction of scavenging in some of the larger villages has been of great assistance in effecting this improvement. The Sanitary Committee very properly consider that, for reasons of decency as well as sanitation, it is necessary for each cottage to be provided with a closet for the exclusive use of the occupier. This has resulted in the building of additional closets.

SCAVENGING.—Since my survey report for the year 1919 the combined parishes of Coltishall and Gt. Hautbois have been added to the list of localities which have the advantage of public scavenging. The number of closet pails and ash-bins emptied by the scavengers in the several parishes is as under:—

| Parish. | No. of Closet Pails. | Ash-bins. |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Aylsham | 460 | 283 |
| Coltishall and Gt. Hautbois | 211 | 115 |
| Hackford | 176 | 72 |

There has been an increase during the year of eight closet pails and nineteen moveable ash-bins with proper covers on the lists of the scavengers.

SANITARY INSPECTIONS OF THE AREA.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Inspections made of dwelling-houses throughout the District | 448 |
| Inspections made of dwelling-houses and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1913 | 295 |

SCHOOLS.—The health of children attending the Elementary Schools in the District is mainly supervised by the County School Medical Officers. Valuable information reaches me from the Head Teachers of the several Schools through a Scheme instituted by the County Medical Officer of Health. Under this Scheme the Head Teacher notifies the District Medical Officer of Health of all children attending his School suffering or suspected of suffering from infectious disease. In this way many cases are brought to light where the parents have not called in medical aid. It is my experience that epidemics of scarlet fever and diphtheria which happen during the time a School is closed for holidays are most difficult to deal with. The vast improvement in the control of infectious disease manifested by the decrease in the number of cases notified is due in a great measure to the early information obtained from Schools and care exercised in the exclusion of children while in an infective stage.

HOUSING.

GENERAL HOUSING CONDITIONS.—In the year 1919 a scheme for the building of ninety-two houses was carried out. This scheme has failed in two particulars.

1. It has not resulted in the closing of the many cottages existing in the District which are known to be unfit for human habitation, or relieved to any extent cases of overcrowding.

2. Owing to the high rent at which these cottages have to be let, housing accommodation has not been provided for agricultural labourers, the class most in need of cottages.

I have information that nine cottages in the District, all of them unfit for human habitation, were recently sold at the rate of £10 each. It is possible by reconstruction to transform at a reasonable cost these nine cottages into three decent houses which could then be let at a comparatively low rent. There are other groups of cottages of a similar character, but there is no likelihood of their being dealt with by private enterprise (Sect. 57, Housing Act, 1925). Could the Council acquire such properties and carry out schemes of reconstruction, very definite improvement in housing conditions would immediately result by reducing the number of "unfit" cottages.

At the present moment it appears to be economically impossible to build cottages suitable for those who are in the greatest need of house accommodation. There is still a demand in certain localities for good cottages by those who are in a position to pay an approximately economic rent.

In the summer of 1925 a Committee was appointed to make inquiries as to the demand for houses in the various villages and the possibility of providing what was found to be required at a reasonable cost, so that houses could be let at a rental approximately within the reach of those who wanted them. Plans and specifications have been prepared, and builders are now invited to tender for the building of forty-six houses distributed through eight villages. The Council are up to the present not committed to embark on a fresh building scheme, and their final decision will be influenced to a large extent, no doubt, by the character of the response to their advertisement for tenders.

OVERCROWDING.—Notwithstanding that the birth-rate has declined very considerably in the last few years, cases of overcrowding have not become less frequent. Labourers with large families cannot afford the rents asked for cottages with three bedrooms. Young persons marry, hoping to be able to find a home, and in the meantime overcrowd their parents' cottages. Only the most urgent cases of overcrowding are brought for the consideration of the Sanitary Committee. Of six such cases, one was dealt with satisfactorily. Another case was temporarily mitigated by two children being taken into the Workhouse, but in a short time they were taken back by their parents. A family of two adults and five children occupy a home-built bungalow constructed of match-boarding, consisting of two rooms with a floor-space of 100 square feet each. The owner-occupier has in this case undertaken to build on another room.

HOUSING STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1925.

Number of new houses erected during the year :—

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----|
| With State assistance under the Housing Acts | 9 |
| By other persons or bodies | 6 |
| Total | 15 |

1.—Unfit Dwelling Houses.

- (1) Total number of inspections made of dwelling houses for housing defects under Public Health or Housing Acts 448
- (2) Number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of Districts) Regulations, 1910. Shown by parishes 295

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Burgh | 41 |
| Tuttington | 17 |
| Banningham | 13 |
| Erpingham | 54 |
| Thwaite | 19 |
| Alby | 31 |
| Reepham | 39 |
| Calthorpe | 33 |
| Wolterton | 9 |
| Wickmere | 39 |
| | <hr/> 295 <hr/> |

- (3) Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation 5
- (4) Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation 53

| | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 2.—Remedy of defects without service of formal Notices | ... | ... | 139 |
| Which includes :— | | | |
| Repairs to structure of dwelling house | ... | ... | 69 |
| Provision of new pail closets | ... | ... | 4 |
| Bin privies converted to pail system | ... | ... | 12 |
| Repairs to privies, wells, pumps, drains, etc. | ... | ... | 41 |
| Minor sanitary defects | ... | ... | 13 |
| 3.—Action under Statutory Powers. | | | |
| A.—Proceedings under Sect. 28 of the Housing Act, 1919, and Sect. 10 (2) of the Housing Act, 1923 :— | | | |
| (1) Number of houses in respect of which Notices were served requiring repairs | ... | ... | 8 |
| (2) Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit— | | | |
| (a) by owners | ... | ... | 6 |
| (b) by Local Authority in default of owners | ... | ... | 2 |
| (3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which closing orders become operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close | ... | ... | 0 |
| B.—Proceedings under Public Health Acts :— | | | |
| (1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied | ... | ... | 1 |
| (2) Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied— | | | |
| (a) by owners | ... | ... | 1 |
| (b) by Local Authority in default of owners | ... | ... | 0 |
| C.—Proceedings under sect. 11 (1), Housing Act, 1925 :— | | | |
| (1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders | ... | ... | 3 |
| (2) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made | ... | ... | 1 |
| (3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling houses having been made fit | ... | ... | 1 |
| (4) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which demolition orders were made... | ... | ... | 0 |
| (5) Number of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of demolition orders | ... | ... | 0 |

Difficulty in providing accommodation for the occupiers of houses represented as unfit for habitation was the reason for not issuing Closing Orders in two instances.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

DAIRIES, COWSHEDS, AND MILKSHOPS.—Efforts have been made during the year to render the register of milksellers more complete. And as a result the register now contains the names of 29 wholesale and 35 retail sellers, a large increase on last year. Inspections have been made and structural improvements in four instances have been carried out. Special care is being taken to see that limewashing is carried out as required by the Regulations. This, as well as ensuring cleanliness, emphasises the fact that the industry is under supervision.

BAKEHOUSES.—In use in the District ... 19
Not now used as bakehouses ... 8

As many as twenty-two inspections of bakehouses were made during the year, and limewashing was called for and carried out in three instances.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES.—There are no Bye-laws with respect to Slaughter-houses in the District.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|
| Registered Slaughter-houses | ... | ... | 26 |
| Licensed Slaughter-houses | ... | ... | 2 |
| Estimated average number of animals slaughtered weekly :— | | | |
| Cattle | ... | ... | 31 |
| Sheep | ... | ... | 51 |
| Swine | ... | ... | 88 |

OCCASIONAL SLAUGHTERING.—Notice was received during the year of the slaughter at other than the fixed times of—Cattle, 3; Swine, 12.

EMERGENCY SLAUGHTERINGS.—Notice was received after the slaughter of the animals in twenty cases. Of these the carcasses of one bullock, five sheep, and one pig were condemned.

In addition the carcasses of two sheep were condemned as the result of a surprise visit.

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

| | | Number notified. | Admitted to Hospital. | Deaths. |
|-----------------|-----|------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Diphtheria | ... | 12 | 0 | 1 |
| Scarlet Fever | ... | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Enteric Fever | ... | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Puerperal Fever | ... | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Erysipelas | ... | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| Pneumonia | ... | 1 | 0 | 10 |

As will be seen from the above table there was but little infectious disease during the year, and what there was was not of a serious character. The cases of diphtheria were confined to the parishes of Buxton and Lamas. The few cases of scarlet fever were of a very mild type.

TUBERCULOSIS.

| | | Number notified. | Admitted to Hospital. | Deaths. |
|----------------|--------|------------------|-----------------------|---------|
| Pulmonary— | Male | 10 | 5 | 3 |
| | Female | 7 | 3 | 5 |
| Non-Pulmonary— | Male | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| | Female | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | 24 | 8 | 9 |

The notification of tuberculosis by medical practitioners is now carried out satisfactorily.

Poor Law relief during the year amounted to £2,724.

No causes of sickness or invalidity have been specially noteworthy in the District during the period under review; and no conditions of occupation or environment which appeared to have had a prejudicial effect on health have been observed.